

Daughters of the Digital Empire

Book One of
Moonlight Hearts

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And Margaret Lovelace

Content Warnings

Sexual content

- 0 none.
- 1 kissing and romance
- 2 heavy petting, implied sex
- 3 non explicit sexual content**
- 4 explicit sexual content
- 5 non consensual content

Violent content

- 0 none.
- 1 action with no death seen
- 2 violence with no blood or gore
- 3 violence with blood and mild gore**
- 4 extreme violence, explicit gore
- 5 sexual assault

List of Trigger Warnings

Sexual assault

Abuse ✓

Child abuse/pedophilia/incest

Animal cruelty or animal death

Self-harm and suicide ✓

Eating disorders, body hatred, and fat phobia

Violence ✓

Pornographic content

Kidnapping and abduction ✓

Death or dying ✓

Pregnancy/childbirth

Miscarriages/abortion

Blood ✓

Mental illness

Ableism

Racism and racial slurs

Sexism and misogyny ✓

Classism ✓

Hateful language directed at religious groups

Transphobia and trans misogyny

Homophobia and heterosexism

Swears or curses ✓

Nudity ✓

Murder ✓

Torture

Chapter 11: The Wolf

We were walking back to Castle Octavian. As we passed the halfway mark, in a quiet side street, Fiona clasped my hand. I gasped.

She whispered to me, “We are being followed. No. I misspeak. We are being hunted. Look, the streets should not be empty. Do not act alarmed. But be ready to seek cover if I tell you.”

So much for romance. I looked around. The streets stood empty. The shops sat closed. Fiona was right, that was weird. It was suspicious, now that I considered it. Even the smell of horse manure was faint here, a near impossibility on a city street. This was the perfect place for an ambush.

We walked on until I felt Fiona’s grip tighten. I prepared to run. Fiona made an abrupt stop and dropped her weapons. Then she grabbed my shoulders and pulled me back against her breast. I had a millisecond to realize that due to our height difference, Fiona’s face buried itself nose deep in my bosom. And then that millisecond passed and a thin hairy beast leaped through the space I had occupied. It landed and rolled to a crouch facing us.

The thing that had attacked was bipedal with the face of a wolf. Muscles rippled beneath skin and fur and precious little fat. Saliva dripped from an open muzzle. Thing curled its lip back exposing fangs. It snarled at us.

“Oh crap, we’re at the part with the werewolves already?” I said.

Fiona looked at me, “This does not surprise you?”

She stepped between me and the werewolf, as I scrambled to explain my foreknowledge of events in the game.

“Precognition, remember?” I said.

Fiona nodded, “Of course, now seek cover!”

I ran for a collection of stray barrels outside an abandoned shop storefront. The werewolf leaped at Fiona. She stood her ground and the werewolf hurtled into her and knocked her on her back. The werewolf raised its clawed hands, ready to rake down onto Fiona. She smiled. And then she drove a silver dagger into the werewolf’s heart.

The blade thrust in up to the hilt. The wound bubbled and hissed. The werewolf flinched, struggled to stay upright for a second, and then toppled over on its back.

Fiona stood, her sash falling to the ground as she did. I hadn't even reached the barrels. I turned back and jogged to Fiona's side. Her sash lay on the ground next to half of the silver clasp.

"Well I know I feel very protected." I said, "That was amazing. You were so fast. I didn't even have time to reach cover. It was just boom, bam, stab, dead. So impressive. Thank you so much for coming. That werewolf would have cut me to ribbons and eaten the pieces if you hadn't been here. I'm rambling. How many clasps like that do you have? Could you get me one? Why did you use that dagger and not your saber? I'm definitely rambling. Am I in shock?"

Fiona patted my shoulder, "You may be in mild shock. Have you ever experienced violence up close before?"

"The occasional drunk fight at a party. And I was drunk then as well."

"Then you are likely in mild shock. Sit down for a moment. No, I have an idea that is better."

She led me to the barrels and sat down cross legged a few feet from them.

She patted her lap, "We need to lower your head and raise your legs. So please, place your head in my lap and prop your feet up on the barrel."

I blushed. I was beginning to feel like I'd be blushing forever. Then a wave of dizziness threatened to steal my balance, and I stumbled. I dropped to one knee as the dizziness swirled in my skull. I took a moment to steady myself and then twisted onto my back. I lay my head in Fiona's lap and propped my feet on a barrel as she had instructed me.

"Now. Try to relax. I will distract you by answering your questions."

"My questions?"

"Yes. Now the first question. I have four such clasps: one in gold, one in silver, and two in steel. I use the gold and silver for more formal occasions. I use the steel ones for my monster hunting. Now the second question. I will see if I am able to obtain a similar clasp for you from my artificer. But that will take time. And the third question. I used

my dagger, because this was a werewolf and none of my other weapons were silver. I am lucky that I did not wear the gold one. Its blade is steel.”

“Yeah. I’m impressed. I didn’t expect a werewolf to go down that easy.”

“Indeed. I am very good at this. But this is a pup, less than fifty years old. The Night Folk become stronger the longer they live. And unless somebody kills them, they do not age or die.”

“That sounds more like a vampire.” I said.

Fiona shook her head, “It is a mistake to think of the immortals as separate entities. Vampires retain all their powers from their younger forms. They can still take the wolfman form. They still are still harmed by silver. They also have even more power.”

“Wait, werewolves are baby vampires?” I said.

“Yes. I know this is not common knowledge among commoners, but I expected a lord to be aware of it.”

“I must not have been paying attention to my tutor that day.” I said.

The dizziness rolled across me for several minutes as I lay in the empty street. Despite my vertigo, I reveled in the feeling of laying my head in Fiona’s lap. She said nothing more as we waited, but stroked my hair with a gentle hand. The dizziness finally passed. But I waited several minutes more before admitting that fact to Fiona.

“I’m feeling better,” I said.

“Well enough to stand?” She asked.

“Well, If I’m being honest, I felt well enough five minutes ago. But you felt so nice that I didn’t say anything.”

Fiona laughed, “And I feared courting you would be a challenge!”

I reddened, “You knew how many men passed through my bed chambers, and thought I would be challenging?”

“Men. I am not a man. When I saw you eyeing my cleavage last night, I knew you had an interest. But I did not know how you would respond to my courting you as a woman. You have bedded men. But to my knowledge you have never allowed yourself to be courted. And you definitely have never been courted by a woman.”

“I feel like a research specimen,” I said, “Wait. You saw me looking at your cleavage?”

“It was very flattering,” Fiona said and then looked away. “I will confess to asking after your history and reputation at the party and back at Myrddhin House. I knew some of the stories. But I wished to prepare to court you. And do not handle social interactions with most people well. And so I prepare for them in advance where possible. I hope this does not offend you.”

“I have the precognitive gift. It would be pretty hypocritical of me to be angry.”

“Thank you. Now, we should check on the body of our attacker.” Fiona said.

I nodded and we stood. Fiona walked to the corpse of the werewolf. The fur and wolf’s head were gone. The werewolf now lay revealed as Ragnar Ulfson, Prince Wulfric’s personal guard. Fiona dropped to one knee and examined the corpse.

“Wulfric’s shadow,” She said. “I do not like this. I should have seen this.”

“My precognition told me that Wulfric was a werewolf,” I said.

I needed a way to bring Fiona up to speed on what I knew about this part of the game. And I could use my mystic gift as a smokescreen.

Fiona nodded, “This does not bode well for us.”

I checked over the corpse, looking for something that might be useful. In his pocket, I found a badge of service, one used by the noble houses to mark a person as aligned with their house. On the badge was the red and gold counterchanged hunting dog of House Octavian.

“This doesn’t fill me with happiness,” I said. “What do you make of it?”

Fiona looked at the badge. “This man or somebody connected to him has been impersonating your people. But where did he get the badge?”

I nodded, “That’s the big question. Let’s ask around at Castle Octavian, and see if any of our servants have the mystic gift of Object Read. Then we can track this badge back through everyone who has held it.”